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## It's Again Time to Dismantle the Cold War Military Machine

by Jacob G. Hornberger

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In 1989, when the Soviet Union dismantled, the American people had a grand opportunity, one in which they could have dismantled the massive national-security state apparatus that had come into existence at the end of World War II for the purpose of confronting America's wartime ally and partner, the Soviet Union. Instead, the U.S. national-security state sought out ways to justify its existence, among which were the drug war and the poking of hornet's nests in the Middle East.

With the end of the long-term occupation of Iraq and the impending withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, along with the destruction of al-Qaeda, the opportunity to dismantle the national-security state, along with the enormous tax burden it creates and its massive infringements on civil liberties, is presenting itself once again.

So, what are the military and the CIA doing about this? Not surprisingly, they are reverting to the drug war — one of the same rationales they were using in 1989 — to justify their continued existence. *According to the New York Times*, the U.S. military is now expanding its operations and bringing its Iraq and Afghanistan experiences to bear in Honduras, which has become one more place in Latin America where drug dealers are operating.

According to the *Times*:

This new offensive, emerging just as the United States military winds down its conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and is moving to confront emerging threats, also showcases the nation's new way of war: small-footprint missions with limited numbers of troops, partnerships with foreign military and police forces that take the lead in security operations, and narrowly defined goals, whether aimed at insurgents, terrorists or criminal groups that threaten American interests.

Here in the United States, the American people prohibit the U.S. military from engaging in law-enforcement activity, including the drug war. The prohibition is known as *posse comitatus*. Americans believe that it's a bad idea to have the military, with its rigid mindset toward killing and war, engaged in law-enforcement activity. Americans have determined as a matter of policy that law enforcement should be left to the police and other civilian law-enforcement agents.

Well, if it's a bad idea to have the military engaged in law enforcement here at home, then why doesn't the principle apply equally to people in Latin America? Isn't it a bit hypocritical to say, "We don't want the U.S. military to enforce drug laws here in the United States because it's harmful and destructive to our society but we do want the military to do so in Latin America"?

The longtime natural propensity of Americans is simply to defer to authority when it comes to the U.S. military and the CIA. It's been inculcated in them since childhood to never question the permanent, ever-lasting nature of these two institutions and to blindly accept their judgment on whatever they do to protect "national security."

That's a very grave mistake, especially when it comes to the freedom, peace, and prosperity of our nation. There is a reason that the Founding Fathers opposed these types of permanent institutions. There is a reason that President Eisenhower warned of the dangers of the military industrial complex. There is a reason that President Kennedy began ignoring the advice and counsel of these two institutions. There is a reason that President Truman wrote that the CIA had become a sinister force in American life.

For one thing, there is absolutely no moral justification for continuing the drug war. And no, providing jobs for the military and the CIA is not a legitimate justification for continuing it. As most everyone knows by now, the drug war has brought nothing but death, destruction, corruption, and violence. Look at Mexico, where a brutal six-year drug-war crackdown enforced by the Mexican military (with the full support of the U.S. military and CIA), has resulted in the deaths of 50,000 people.

Nonetheless, the U.S. military is now doubling down in Honduras.

Secondly, the original justification for the national-security state, including the massive permanent military industrial complex and the CIA, was the communist threat from the Soviet Union, America's World War II partner and ally. That threat disintegrated in 1989, much to the surprise of the U.S. military and the CIA. Once the justification for the national-security state disintegrated, that was the time to dismantle the military-industrial complex, the enormous overseas Cold War military empire, and the CIA.

Instead, the national-security apparatus cited new rationales to maintain its continued existence, including such things as the drug war, rogue elements in an unsafe world, and promoting American business interests abroad. At the same time, the U.S. national-security state went into the Middle East and poked enough hornet's nests to produce terrorist retaliation (e.g., the USS Cole, the U.S. embassies in East Africa, the World Trade Center in 1993, and 9/11), which ultimately brought the "war on terrorism."

There is no better time than now for Americans to begin reflecting on a major shift in direction for our nation. Nothing could be more obvious than that the system that we have now isn't working. It's time for a paradigm shift — one away from the doctrines of statism under which we have been operating and toward our nation's founding principles of private property, free markets, and a constitutional republic.

That necessarily entails an end to the war on drugs and a dismantling of the national-security state apparatus, including the overseas bases, the military-industrial complex, and the CIA that were brought into existence for the specific purpose of fighting the Cold War. It's what should have been done in 1989, if not before. It should be done today. Our freedom, peace, security, and prosperity depend on it.